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**FS** Parlamento  
Regionale  
degli  
Studenti  
TOSCANA

*Our  
Africa*



*An Appeal  
from the Students  
of Tuscany*

*“So they seized Africa, they shared it out  
and everyone painted it out with his own colours . . . ”*

**For more than five years, we, boys and girls members of the Students’ Regional Parliament of Tuscany,**

have been committed, so far, to develop citizenship “awareness” and acquaintance with the biggest social, institutional and environmental issues among Tuscany students and young citizens.

We do it in many different ways but renewing the same passion year by year and striving to address our activity to a common object.

In the year 2006-2007, according to the theme of the Tuscany Day we decided to start from voluntarism in order to draw people attention straight to the African continent.

*We are convinced that Africa represents a big challenge in our century and that it can be considered a big unprecedented future opportunity for Europe - which last year has been the object of one petition of ours presented to re- launch the constitutional process.*

First of all we would like to start with the closest and less remarkable problem:

### **how do we reflect about the situation Africa is living today?**

Indifference and inattention are not the only obstacles to overcome.

Documents we have been able to examine (especially the Millennium’s objects, with the campaign “No excuse 2015” and analysis contained in *Our common Interest by UN*), lectures and evidences we support thanks to this appeal - convinced us that we often conceive Africa by following stereotypes which must be overcome, otherwise they will only spread banal and distort images.

We got used to a refrain saying: *“Africa is poverty, hunger, illness, exploitation, wars... it’s a lost continent. Africa is a tragic image of children in danger”*.

This is certainly true, but the problem in hand is just a part of the truth, the one would only exhort us to compassion and charity.

**We believe there is something more**, a lot more to do and to get acquaintance with. In Africa, as in Europe, there is a **complex life**, made up of many different cultures and peoples not referable only to one levelled image.

We are fully aware of the **debit** we have to this continent, aware of colonialism responsibilities, which broke down the balance of old African civilizations, twisting the economic, social and territorial structures.

Nowadays new insidious kinds of colonialism are developing themselves, while economic interests sometimes corrupt even humanitarian interventions.

A clear explanatory slogan sums up our thinking *“Europe and Africa together through strong programs for cooperation and partnership”*, living behind pure exploitation logics, overcoming simple forms of compassion and focussing on such fundamental values as **equality, respect, and sustainable growth**.

**We ask you to commit yourselves to work with us not only “for” Africa but also “together” with Africa.**

We know there is a special kind of voluntarism, which is all the time patrimony of our region: voluntarism of solidarity and cooperation, hundreds of people whose experience and knowledge offer a mutual advantage.

Many of our schools, nevertheless, are already committed in solidarity projects with Africa.

We intend to enhance this commitment letting people know the whole solidarity world of Tuscany, following a reach and varied agenda of activities and initiatives articulated in each province and planned for next year’s first four month.

### **What can we do, here and now for Africa?**

We ask you to help us to create better equal dialogue conditions with groups of Africans living in our towns, in order to support their integration, beating indifference, fighting disinformation, and working for peace and democracy, so that citizens of our country will “fall in love” with Africa, with its human and cultural resources, with its art and literature.

The projects’ concrete support is important, but the growth of awareness and knowledge means even more. We would like to let people know we can do something, without expecting to do everything, nor renouncing, nor doing anything at all.

If, at the end of our job, we will achieve our objective, if, in each province, we will convince some young people in taking part in this challenge, and if a renewed people’s interest will come to life, as well as the desire to know more, where before reigned indifference and wrong images, if thanks to our effort there will be one more well, school, book, or one mosquito net, or if one vaccine dose more will be delivered, than we will have hit the target!

We will have add just a crumb, ours, but we will be proud of that.

**We want our commitment to become yours.**

**Anyway, we’ll try!**

**We boys and girls of the Student’s Regional Parliament of Tuscany,  
gathered today, 29th November 2006 in Florence,**

**Referring** to the purposes of the Student’s Regional Parliament of Tuscany, that is to say:

- Development of the knowledge, by choosing one theme on which will be possible to plan initiatives;
- Development of the **participation** through moments lived together by students and meeting with institutions or other subjects of the civil society;
- Experimentation of new forms of **active citizenship** through a concrete commitment on themes having civil and social nature;
- Practice of **democratic decision**, as result of both Assembly dialogue and work in Commission as well as in the assembly hall;

**Considering appropriate** to agree with a theme, in accordance to the one of the Tuscany Day, on which it is possible to plan initiatives and in-depth analysis tending to focus on citizenship education -the core of our activity;

**Regarding** this year Tuscany Day theme - voluntarism - it urges to highlight aspects such as solidarity and international cooperation with Africans.

### **We bound ourselves**

- To offer our solidarity and cooperative support to the African continent; first of all by spreading this values among the 140.000 high schools’ students in Tuscany;
- To ask all the schools to comply with our **“Africa appeal”**;
- To implement a debate among young people, in order to overcome stereotypes of a passive continent; considered just as a humanitarian emergency;
- To promote African culture, fighting superficial behaviours spread out everywhere, trying not to lower our eyes but renewing our commitment so that African peoples will be the real protagonists of their own recovery.

**We firmly believe** that before **“cooperating with Africa”** it would be necessary working on ourselves and on our sensibility. We also intend to promote initiatives addressed to students of our region in order to spread out **knowledge and awareness**.

**Starting from now, we also regard extremely urgent** being part of the institutional partnership net which is active on the territory, elaborating operational proposals to support cooperative and volunteering projects already begun in several provincial contexts. We will especially take care of those African areas presenting most humanitarian, environmental and ecological emergencies.

**With this purpose we intend to compare ourselves** with those who lived, or are still living, this reality, getting in touch with African women and men who present different social and cultural backgrounds, and who are able to witness experiences characterized by richness and diversity.

Sources we will use will be as free as possible from prejudice and “icons” of a poor, undefended Africa.

**We want to appreciate** Africa artistic and cultural expressions (music, literature, cinema etc...) especially for those countries our effort will be focussed on.

**We wish all these interventions became an everlasting incentive for a personal growth: just through knowledge and contacts with different realities, in facts, we will be able to reach higher levels of awareness on our lifestyles.**